

**ADDRESS TO THE BRITISH
ASSOCIATION FOR THE
ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE,
DELIVERED BY THE PRESIDENT**

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Address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Delivered by the President
by W. R. Grove

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W. R. GROVE

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1867

ADDRESS

TO THE

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

1866

LONDON
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NEW-COURT SQUARE

ADDRESS

TO THE

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

DELIVERED BY THE PRESIDENT,

W. R. GROVE, Esq., Q.C., M.A., F.R.S.

AT

NOTTINGHAM, AUGUST 22, 1866.

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LONDON :

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

1867.



ADDRESS
OF
WILLIAM ROBERT GROVE, ESQ.

PRESIDENT OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT
OF SCIENCE, NOTTINGHAM, 1860.

If our rude predecessors, who at one time inhabited the caverns which surround this town, could rise from their graves and see it in its present state, it may be doubtful whether they would have sufficient knowledge to be surprised.

The machinery, almost resembling organic beings in delicacy of structure, by which are fabricated products of world-wide reputation, the powers of matter applied to give motion to that machinery, are so far removed from what must have been the conceptions of the semi-barbarians to whom I have alluded, that they could not look on them with intelligent wonder.

Yet this immense progress has all been effected step by step, now and then a little more rapidly

than at other times; but, viewing the whole course of improvement, it has been gradual, though moving in an accelerated ratio. But it is not merely in those branches of natural knowledge which tend to improvements in economical arts and manufactures, that science has made great progress. In the study of our own planet and the organic beings with which it is crowded, and in so much of the universe as vision, aided by the telescope, has brought within the area of observation, the present century has surpassed any antecedent period of equal duration.

It would be difficult to trace out all the causes which have led to the increase of observational and experimental knowledge.

Among the more thinking portion of mankind the gratification felt by the discovery of new truths, the expansion of faculties, and extension of the boundaries of knowledge, have been doubtless a sufficient inducement to the study of nature; while, to more practical minds, the reality, the certainty, and the progressive character of the acquisitions of natural science, and the enormously increased means which its applications give, have impressed its importance as a minister to daily wants and a contributor to ever-increasing material comforts, luxury, and power.

Though by no means the only one, yet an important cause of the rapid advance of science is the

growth of associations for promoting the progress either of physical knowledge generally, or of special branches of it. Since the foundation of the Royal Society, now more than two centuries ago, a vast number of kindred societies have sprung up in this country and in Europe. The advantages conferred by these societies are manifold; they enable those who are devoted to scientific research, to combine, compare, and check their observations, to assist, by the thoughts of several minds, the promotion of the inquiry undertaken; they contribute from a joint purse to such efforts as their members deem most worthy; they afford a means of submitting to a competent tribunal notices and memoirs, and of obtaining for their authors and others, by means of the discussions which ensue, information given by those best informed on the particular subject; they enable the author to judge whether it is worth his while to pursue the subjects he has brought forward, and they defray the expense of printing and publishing such researches as are thought meritorious.

These advantages, and others might be named, pertain to the Association the thirty-sixth meeting of which we are this evening assembled to inaugurate; but it has, from its intermittent and peripatetic character, advantages which belong to none of the societies which are fixed as to their locality.

Among these are the novelty and freshness of an